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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 KHARTOUM 000724

NOFORN
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DEPARTMENT FOR AF A/S FRAZER, S/E WILLIAMSON, AF/SPG, AF/C,
NEA
NSC FOR PITTMAN AND HUDSON
ADDIS ABABA ALSO FOR USAU

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TAGS: PGOV PREL MOPS PHUM SU CD
SUBJECT: SUDAN'S NSC DISCUSSES JEM ATTACK AS ARRESTS
CONTINUE

REF: A. KHARTOUM 716

¶B. KHARTOUM 710

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Classified By: CDA Alberto M. Fernandez, Reason: Sections 1.4 (b) and (d)

Summary

¶1. (S/NF) In the aftermath of the JEM attack on Omdurman (reflets) Sudan's National Security Council pledged to "react" to Chadian aggression, neutralize the "fifth column" that supported the rebels, and exploit the opportunity to enhance Sudan's international image, Senior Assistant to the President Minni Minawi said on May 11. President Bashir quieted some advisors' calls for retribution against certain ethnic groups, an allusion to JEM's (and Minawi's) Zaghawa tribe, and emphasized the need for national unity. The security services, however, have detained over 110 Zaghawa civilians since May 9, many of whom have been beaten. Popular Congress Party leader Hassan Al Turabi--the regime's nemesis (and original patron) who is often said to be JEM's founding father--and several of his senior lieutenants were also arrested on May 12. While it is too early to know who within the NCP establishment will take the fall for such an egregious security breach, the USG can play a vital role in empowering certain figures in the regime who may be more inclined to seek a deal that addresses the political problems underlying the conflicts in Chad and Darfur. End summary.

Six Decisions

¶2. (C) Meeting with CDA Fernandez on May 11, Senior Assistant to the President and Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) Chairman Minni Minawi said that Sudan's National Security Council took six decisions in the wake of the Justice and Equality Movement's (JEM) May 10-11 bold attack on the Khartoum suburb of Omdurman (reftel): 1) To condemn the attackers in the strongest terms; 2) To "react" against Chadian-orchestrated aggression; 3) To neutralize the "fifth column" in Khartoum that may have supported the rebel offensive; 4) To use the opportunity provided by the attack to improve Sudan's international image by portraying itself as a victim and attributing recent bombing campaigns in Darfur to an attempt

to halt JEM's advance; 5) To unify the national political forces given most political parties condemnation of the attack; 6) To press for JEM leader Khalil Ibrahim's international isolation, including his inclusion on an Interpol watchlist.

The Fifth Column vs. National Unity

¶3. (C) Following Defense Minister Abdelrahim Mohammed Hussein's sheepish account of JEM's skillfull evasion of a Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) division sent to intercept the rebels north of Omdurman on May 10, several hard-line presidential advisors, as well as SLM Secretary General Mustafa Tirab (a Fur), made threatening statements against "the tribes which supported the invaders," a clear allusion to Ibrahim (and Minawi's) Zaghawa tribe. National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) Director General Salah Ghosh reported that Ibrahim is hiding in Omdurman, which Minawi interpreted as a pretext for house-to-house raids targeting Zaghawa. Presidential Advisor Abdallah Ali Massar (one of the intellectual authors of the Janjawid Arab militia) piled on by launching a vitriolic attack on the unnamed "treacherous tribe."

¶4. (C) Preferring to avoid a backlash, President Omar Al Bashir re-directed the blame from a single ethnic group, and instead emphasized the importance of maintaining solidarity within the Government of National Unity and cohesion in greater Khartoum's multi-ethnic population. However, he rejected First Vice President Salva Kiir's recommendation to pursue negotiations with Chad rather than breaking relations and stressed that Chadian diplomats in Khartoum helped coordinate the assault. Bashir noted that Ethiopia, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates pledged "support" for Sudan,

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without providing specifics. Minnawi noted that Bashir obsessed on methods used to crush insurgents with the President suggesting that "we publicize what the Americans do in Iraq and Afghanistan" as Sudan seeks to do the same. Sudanese TV reported on May 12 that Bashir had received phone calls of support from the Egyptian, Yemeni and Congo-Brazzaville Presidents and Hamas leader Khalid Meshaal.

Libyan Role?

¶5. (S/NF) While Libyan involvement was not discussed, Minawi speculated that Tripoli supplied much of JEM's arsenal. Given that the weapons were Russian-made, he said they "were from either Libya or Eritrea, through Chad" rather than from President Deby directly or obtained through previous JEM raids on SAF units, which rely on Chinese arms. (Note: Minawi listed JEM's arsenal as containing SPG-9 73mm recoilless guns, 14.5mm heavy machine guns, B-11 107mm recoilless rifles, and ZU-23 23mm AA guns. He retains intermittent contact with Libyan officials, including intelligence chiefs Abdullah Sanousi and Musa Kusa and as recently as February received uniforms and other equipment from Libya for his own force after a visit to Tripoli. End note.)

Ibrahim's Arrogance

¶6. (C) Minawi asserted that Ibrahim's arrogance led him to believe that he could in fact overthrow the Sudanese Government during the recent assault. As a measure of this behavior, Minawi cited Ibrahim's decision in early 2007 to redraw the geographic lines of Darfur's three states, appoint governors to each new state, and appoint new Zaghawa sultans to rival the existing two. He explained, however, that JEM

had not deployed high-quality fighters during the recent offensive. Referring to the television images of the some of the captured and bedraggled JEM fighters, Minawi called them "school boys and waiters" from the Tama or Massaleit tribes, not battle-hardened Zaghawa. He noted that if they had been Zaghawa, they would have made it across one of the Nile bridges into Khartoum because the raiders initially faced only Sudanese police in their advance before SAF and NISS troops were able to respond. Minawi speculated that the JEM leader probably offered the recruits 500 Sudanese Pounds each (250 US) to join the attack on Khartoum. Other rebel movements, though avoiding outright condemnation of JEM, remain distant from Ibrahim, fearing that he will fulfill his pledge to "take Khartoum and clean Sudan of the other rebel movements." He confirmed press reports that one of Ibrahim's top lieutenants, the intellectual Jamali Hassan Jelaledin, died in a bombing raid on May 11 in Kordofan.

Detentions Continue

¶7. (C) Predicting that the next 24-hours would herald "many arrests and torture" of Darfurians--particularly Zaghawa--in metropolitan Khartoum, Minawi said he had told both the National Security Council and the Council of Ministers that GNU should focus on mitigating tribal tensions and avoid retributive acts on civilians. Arrests have continued throughout greater Khartoum, however, according to SLM officials tallying the detentions. As of May 12, the security services have detained over 110 Zaghawa in the capital, some of whom have been severely beaten. Meanwhile, the Zaghawa-dominated area of Umm Bedda, in west Omdurman, is sealed off and a complete curfew remains in place while police and the security services conduct house-to-house searches. (Note: The curfew was lifted in Khartoum on May 11). The security services in El Fasher, North Darfur, also arrested two SLM officials (both Zaghawa) on May 11. There are other widespread, yet inspecific, reports of reprisals throughout Darfur, including detentions of civilians in El Geneina, Nyala, and El Fasher.

¶8. (C) In addition, Popular Congress Party (PCP) Chairman Hassan al Turabi, long rumored to be JEM's founding father with close and continuing ties to Ibrahim (which he denies);

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PCP Secretary General Bashir Adam Rahma; and six other senior PCP officials were arrested at 0530 hours local time on May 12. Khartoum State Chairman Adam Tahir Hamdoul, who was previously arrested and then released on May 10, was among them. Turabi and Rahma returned from a party conference in the eastern state of Sennar at 0330 hours, Rahma's wife told Poloff after her husband's arrest. She believes all of the PCP officials are being held in the Khobar Prison in Omdurman. In addition, Egyptian security services reportedly detained JEM Chief Negotiator, Ahmed Tugoud, who was in Cairo during the JEM attack, on the evening of May 11.

Comment

¶9. (C) Post is closely tracking the arrests and reports of human rights violations in the aftermath of the JEM offensive and will continue to press the government to exercise restraint vis-a-vis civilians. Meanwhile, the U.S. should use the political openings provided by recent events to forestall regime hardliners seeking a brutal and futile military response to this challenge and, probably, a renewed proxy war with Chad. The sudden JEM assault, which threatened the national capital itself, exposed the weakness of a regime hitherto seen as the model of an Arab autocracy, complete with a formidable security apparatus. While it is too early to know who within the establishment will take the fall for such an egregious breach, the USG can play a vital

role in empowering certain figures in the regime who may be more inclined to seek a deal that addresses the political problems underlying the conflicts in Chad and Darfur--which have now reached Khartoum for the first time in the country's history. Our swift condemnation of the attack has likely demonstrated to regime hard-liners that the U.S. does not, despite their paranoia, seek regime change and certainly does not support the Islamist aspirations of Khalil Ibrahim. We should use the resulting goodwill to engage directly with pragmatic NCP officials, at a high-level, to gain commitments that would address Darfuri's legitimate political aspirations, isolate the militant Ibrahim, and lessen Sudan-Chad tensions. End comment.

¶10. (U) Tripoli minimize considered.
FERNANDEZ